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U.S. VICE PRESIDENT VISITS TALLINN. Al Gore, accompanied by Estonian President Lennart Meri, flew to Tallinn from Copenhagen on 13 March for a six-hour visit, BNS reports. In a public address at Town Hall Square, Gore said: "No outside power should ever again cast a veto over your future; you must not be consigned to a 'gray zone' of fear and uncertainty." He witnessed the signing of a U.S.-Estonian memorandum on environmental protection in which the U.S. pledges $2 million for the clean-up of the former Russian submarine base at Paldiski. Gore also met with prime ministers Andres Tarand (Estonia), Maris Gailis (Latvia), and Adolfas Slezevicius (Lithuania). He proposed that the three countries take part in the development of an air traffic control system in Central Europe. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

NEW VISA REGIME BETWEEN LITHUANIA AND RUSSIA. Lithuania has reached a bilateral agreement with Russia modifying the visa regulations for cross-border visits, according to Interfax on 13 March quoting Deputy Director of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry's Consular Department Arturas Zurauskas. Beginning April 1996, citizens of one country permanently residing in the other will be able to travel to and from their "ethnic motherland" without visas if they have an invitation. There will be no charge for visas for visitors taking part in scientific-technical and cultural exchanges, sports competitions, or funerals of close relatives. Visas for children under 16 will also be free of charge. The agreement gives law enforcement and other government bodies the right to bar someone from entering the other country or limiting the length of his stay without justifying their decision. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

HEAD OF LITHUANIAN PARLIAMENT APOLOGIZES FOR COMMUNIST CRIMES

VILNIUS, Mar 13, BNS - The chairman of the Lithuanian parliament has publicly apologized for Soviet era crimes committed by the Communists.

"I had been a member of the Communist Party for over 20 years. I feel moral responsibility for those who committed crimes against the Lithuanian nation and the state on behalf of the party," Ceslovas Jursenas said at a special parliament session held Saturday to mark the 5th anniversary of Lithuanian independence restoration.

"I would like to ask for forgiveness for those Communists and nonparty men who collaborated with the subjugators, persecuted, deported, imprisoned and tortured innocent people," Jursenas said in the presence of the country's leaders and foreign diplomats.

Press sources said the apology had been coordinated in advance with the leadership of the ruling Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party of former Communists. Jursenas is a member of the LDLP Presidium.

Meanwhile, President Algirdas Brazauskas, formerly the first secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, said in a television interview last week he saw no need to apologize for Communist crimes.